

# BOA CONSTRICTOR.



## CHARACTER GENERICUS.

*Scuta abdominalia.*

*Scuta subcaudalia (absque crepitaculo).*

*Lin. Syst. Nat. p. 373.*

*Cl. Amphibia. Ord. Serpentes.*

## CHARACTER SPECIFICUS.

BOA VARIEGATA, scutis abdominalibus 240,  
subcaudalibus 60.

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Qui vasta et mirabilia Naturæ opera nunquam *αυτοπ-*  
*ται* contemplati sunt, ii sane quicquid varie de illis  
scripserint peregrinatores, caute et dubitanter recipere  
solent; immo sæpe utpote fabulosum omnino rejici-  
unt. Inter hæc Naturæ magnalia jure numerandi  
sunt serpentes illi ingentes, qui in nonnullis Indiæ,  
Africæ, et Americæ regionibus inveniuntur; quique  
in tantam magnitudinem adolescunt ut quadrupedia  
etiam majora ingurgitare possint; et longitudine adeo  
sunt enormi, ut sæpe pedes viginti, viginti-quinque,  
vel etiam triginta superent. Horum temporis pro-  
gressu multo rarior est conspectus, illosque probabile  
est regiones olim sane desertas et nunc excultas, popu-  
losque frequentes reliquisse, et in tesqua deserta et  
remota

remota exulasse. Spectantur tamen aliquando, hortos et loca habitaculis suis propiora perreptantes.

Felix fane faustumque est humano generi mirandos hosce serpentes veneno prorsus carere; ob molem tantum et robur timendos; quibus fane adeo præpollent ut cervos aliosque majores quadrupedes; constringendo et amplexando enectos, lento haustu absorbeant: et dein usque ad stuporem et torporem satiati latent, delectique facile vel sclopetis, vel aliis modis confici possint.

Cum prægrandes hos serpentes quasi ad aliorum animalium perniciem natos contemplamur, horrescimus illos et aversemur necesse est; si vero formam tantum et colores spectemus, non mediocrem illis inesse pulchritudinem lubentissime fatebimur. Color illis, uti et aliis hujus generis, diversus est pro varia ætate; ut plurimum tamen est cinereus, per dorsum et latera plagis maculisque oblongis, magnis, fusco-rubentibus, seu ferrugineis, margine nigro circumscriptis, et albo flavoque notatis variatus: venter plerumque flavesceps albet.

Referunt historici totum Romanum exercitum, conspecto immodico serpente, (quem verisimile est ejusdem speciei fuisse cum illo qui in tabula depingitur), ingenti metu perculsum subito, et consternatum fuisse. Immanem hunc serpentem Valerius Maximus ex libro Livii historiæ deperdito his verbis memorat.

“ Quæ quia supra usitatam rationem excedentia attingimus, serpentis quoque a T. Livio curiose pariter ac facunde relata fiat mentio: Is enim ait in Africa apud Bagradam flumen tantæ magnitudinis anguem  
fuisse

fuisse ut Attilii Reguli exercitum usu annis prohiberet; multisque militibus ingenti ore correptis, compluribus cauda voluminibus elisis, cum telorum jactu perforari nequiret, ad ultimum balistarum tormentis undique petitam, filicum crebris et ponderosis verberibus procubuisse; omnibusque et cohortibus legionibus ipsa Carthagine visam terribiliorem: atque etiam cruore suo gurgitibus imbutis, corporisque jacentis pestifero afflatu vicina regione polluta, Romana inde summovisse castra: dicit belluæ etiam corium cxx pedes longum in urbem missum." VAL. MAX.

Livium vero ipsum elegantibus supplementis æmulatus est Joannes Frienshemius; audiant igitur velim lectores Frienshemium miram rem suo more diserte recitantem.

"Interea M. Regulus proximâ quæque subigendo in loca pervenerat per quæ flumen Bagra da labitur: ad quod castra habentes Romanos improvisa pestis et damno non mediocri, et terrore adhuc majore percudit. Magnitudinis enim portentosæ serpens aquatum perfectos milites invasit; territisque et nequidquam repugnantibus multos ingentis oris hiatu sorbuit: alios spirarum voluminibus et caudæ verbere obtrivit; nonnullos ipso pestilentis halitus afflatu exanimavit: tantumque negotii M. Regulo facessere potuit, ut totis viribus cum eo de possessione annis fuerit dimicandum. Quod ubi cum jactura militum fiebat, neque vinci aut vulnerari draco potuerat, durissima squamarum lorica, quidquid telorum ingereretur, facile repellente; confugiendum ad machinas, advectisque ballistis et catapultis velut arx quædam munita, deji-

ciendus

ciendus hostis fuit. Post aliquot jactus in vanum emissos ingens faxum spina dorsi perfracta, vigorem impetumque formidalis monstri resolvit. Sic quoque difficulter confectum est, tanto cum horrore legionum et cohortium, ut *se oppugnare Carthaginem, quam alteram talem bestiam malle faterentur*. Neque diutius ibi morari castra potuerunt, quin tabo infectas aquas, et omnem circa regionem fætoze jacentis pestifero adflatam fugerent. Non sine rubore aliquo humanæ superbiæ, quæ non raro viribus suis nihil negatum esse stolide putat. Exercitum certe Romanum imperatore M. Regulo, terra marique victorem unus anguis et vivus exercuit, et interfectus submovit. Quare nec puduit Proconsulem hujus etiam hostis spolia Romam mittere, timorisque sui magnitudinem et victoriæ gaudium publico monumento fateri. Corium enim belluæ detractum in urbem devehendum curavit: quod centum viginti pedes longum fuisse dicitur; et in templo quodam suspensum, ad Numantini usque belli tempora duravisse.” JOAN. FRIENSH. Suppl. Livian.







*Reticulated Snake. Dipsosaaurus dorsalis. (See Plate 1, p. 10, of the same work.)*

# THE GREAT BOA.



## GENERIC CHARACTER.

Transverse *Lamellæ* both on the abdomen and beneath the tail.

## SPECIFIC CHARACTER.

VARIEGATED BOA with about 240 *Lamellæ* on the abdomen and 60 beneath the tail.

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By those who are unacquainted with the wonders of Nature, the descriptions given by Naturalists of some of the more striking and singular animals, are received with a degree of cautious scepticism, or even rejected as exceeding the bounds of credibility. Amongst these animals may well be numbered the prodigious serpents which are sometimes found in India, Africa, and America; serpents of so great a size as to be able to ingorge even some of the larger quadrupeds, and of so enormous a length as to measure 20, 25, and 30 feet. There is reason to believe that these immense serpents are become less common now than some centuries backwards, and that in proportion as cultivation and population have increased, the larger species of noxious animals have been expelled from the haunts of mankind, and driven into the more distant and uncultivated tracts. They are still however occasionally seen, and sometimes

times approach the plantations and gardens of the districts nearest to their residence.

It is happy for mankind that these gigantic serpents are not poisonous ; they are therefore to be dreaded only on account of their vast size and strength, which latter is so great as to enable them to kill cattle, deer, and other animals by writhing themselves round them, so as to crush them to death by mere pressure ; after which they swallow them in a very gradual manner, and when thus gorged with their prey, grow almost torpid with repletion ; and if discovered in this state may without much difficulty be dispatched by shooting or by other methods.

Considered as one of the great destroyers of the animal world, this serpent must be viewed with horror ; but if we take into consideration only its form and colors, we cannot deny it a very great share of external beauty ; like many of its tribe, it is apt to vary in color, and appears in a more or less vivid state according to the period of life in which it happens to be found ; but it is generally of a greyish color, variegated on the back and sides in the most curious manner with large oblong patches and spots of bright reddish brown, which are still further decorated by having black margins, surrounded both internally and externally with streaks of white and yellow : the belly is commonly of a yellowish white.

It was in all probability an enormous specimen of this very serpent that once diffused so violent a terror amongst the most valiant of mankind, and threw a whole Roman army into dismay. Historians relate  
this



this surprizing event in terms of considerable luxuriance. Valerius Maximus thus mentions it from Livy, in one of the lost books of whose history it was related more at large.

“ And since we are on the subject of uncommon phenomena, we may here mention the serpent, so eloquently and accurately recorded by Livy; who says that near the river Bagrada in Africa a snake was seen of so enormous a magnitude as to prevent the army of Attilius Regulus from the use of the river; and after snatching up several soldiers with its enormous mouth, and devouring them, and killing several more by striking and squeezing them with the spires of its tail, was at length destroyed by assailing it with all the force of military engines and showers of stones; after it had withstood the attack of their spears and darts: that it was regarded by the whole army as a more formidable enemy than even Carthage itself; and that the whole adjacent region being tainted with the pestilential effluvia proceeding from its remains, and the waters with its blood, the Roman army was obliged to remove its station: he also adds that the skin of the monster, measuring 120 feet in length, was sent to Rome as a trophy.” VAL. MAX.

The learned Frienshemius, in his *Supplementa Liviana*, has attempted a more ample and circumstantial narrative of the same event, and it cannot be unsatisfactory to the reader to receive a quotation from an author, who has so happily imitated the manner of the great historian.

“ In the mean time Regulus, every where victorious,  
led,

led his army into a region watered by the river Bagrada, near which an unlooked for misfortune awaited them, and at once affected the Roman camp with considerable loss, and with apprehensions still more terrible; for a serpent of prodigious size attacked the soldiers who were sent for water, and while they were overwhelmed with terror, and unequal to the conflict, engulphed several of them in its enormous mouth, and killed others by writhing round them with its spires, and bruising them with the strokes of its tail: and some were even destroyed by the pestilential effluvia proceeding from its breath; it caused so much trouble to Regulus that he found it necessary to contest the possession of the river with it by employing the whole force of his army; during which a considerable number of soldiers were lost, while the serpent could neither be vanquished nor wounded; the strong armour of its scales easily repelling the force of all the weapons that were directed against it; upon which recourse was had to battering engines; with which the animal was attacked in the manner of a fortified tower, and was thus at length overpowered. Several discharges were made against it without success, till its back being broken by an immense stone, the formidable monster began to lose its powers, and was yet with difficulty destroyed; after having diffused such a horror amongst the army, that they confessed they would rather attack Carthage itself than such another monster. Nor could the camp continue any longer in the same station, but was obliged to fly; the water and the whole adjacent region being tainted with the pestiferous effluvia. A  
most

most mortifying humiliation to human pride! which sometimes vainly imagines nothing capable of resisting the powers of man. Here at least was an instance of a whole Roman army under the command of Regulus, and universally victorious both by sea and land, opposed by a single snake, which conflicted with it when living, and even when dead obliged it to depart. The proconsul therefore thought it no diminution to his dignity to send the spoils of such an enemy to Rome, and to confess at once the greatness of his victory and his terror by this public memorial; for he caused the skin of the snake to be taken off, and sent to the city; which is said to have measured 120 feet: it was suspended in a temple, and remained till the time of the Numantine war." FRIENSH. SUPPL. LIV.